

"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR."

ALL THE YEAR ROUND

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PHŒBE: GIRL AND WIFE.

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MRS. TILLOTSON," &c. &c.

CHAPTER XXXII. THE TRUANT'S RETURN.

THUS stimulated, Mr. Pringle at last found his way to the Dawson family, where Mrs. Dawson welcomed him with an "Oh, you naughty boy!" He was then conducted with some solemnity to see Phœbe; and when the poor little thing—eager, panting, and agreeable—tried to flutter over to him like some wounded dove, our hero felt a pang of remorse; and the spectacle of such affection roused in him all the old sympathy and interest, which he had before felt on those nights at the garden-gate.

Yet between these two scenes there was a surprising difference; for then there was the bright little maid full of piquancy, the romance of excitement, the scenic air of the situation where all was love and adventure, grace and beauty, without that prosaic element of responsibility and trouble. But here was the whole translated into prose—the rather mean lodgings, the worry and anxiety of real life, and an invalid girl rising from a sofa, with little to distinguish her from the crowd of sober and unromantic beings that walk the boards of life. However, as we say, pure was the feeling of pity, even tender interest, in our hero's heart; and with a sigh he owned to himself that reparation was due to this injured little maid, for whose sore case he was accountable.

"What a pitiable creature!" will perhaps be the reflection, as this gentleman's proceedings are followed. But it is probable that this flux and reflux of indecision lives

in many persons' breasts, who, however, are lucky enough to have sufficient sense to prevent them allowing the inward impression to direct outward action; and in this way they appear to the world consistent persons enough.

However this may be, we have now this wavering being restored to his Phœbe, who was prattling away in the delight of her soul, while Mr. Pringle, desperately setting anxieties and difficulties behind him for the time, lent himself to the pleasant enchantment, and fancied he was performing a very chivalrous and noble act of devotion and self-sacrifice.

The prudent mother did not let the opportunity go by without profit, and assuming that there was but one aim now, which was to get matters brought to a happy conclusion as speedily as possible, said, "Now, my dears, the thing is to have you married at once. I think you couldn't do better than put yourselves into Tom's hands."

That night, accordingly, Tom was called in, and cheerfully undertook all the arrangements.

But before this chapter of troubles was to conclude, there was to be one more rather trying situation. A few days before the time fixed, the Pringle carriage drove up, and Sam descended. He had come on what he purposed should be a diplomatic mission, but which he conducted in the most undiplomatic fashion that could be conceived. This was only what might be expected. Happily Phœbe had gone out for a drive with Tom; otherwise the spectacle of her future father, bursting in violently, and conducting himself outrageously, would have discomposed her.

"I tell you what, ma'am," he said,

"you have behaved disreputably and disgracefully. My son has been entrapped among you; yes, entrapped, ma'am!"

Mrs. Dawson repudiated this charge with dignity.

"I make every allowance for your feelings, Mr. Pringle——"

"I want none of your speeches, ma'am," he said; "I want to come to business. It is simply ridiculous, the whole affair, and if you have any sense left, you'll join with me in stopping it."

Mrs. Dawson smiled. "It is too late now," she said.

"Not a bit. I tell you what. Can't you go away—take her away—out of the country? Of course it's a sacrifice, the girl's feelings and all that; but, really—I don't know how to put it—but my men of business, Messrs. Cooper and Co.—"

"Now—now, really," said Mrs. Dawson, rising, "don't go further, I beg. Pray spare yourself and your own dignity, if not me."

"Fudge!" said old Sam, beside himself with rage, "how squeamish we are. I tell you—any substantial amount—Cooper and Co. have my directions——"

"This is most ungentlemanly," said Mrs. Dawson, going to the door. "If I were to refer you to my son, Tom Dawson, as you do me to your 'Cooper and Co.', you would not make such a proposal a second time."

"Very well, very well, ma'am; mind, I came to give you one last chance. Let the thing go on. Mind, I tell you not a sixpence shall the fellow have, or the scheming chit he chooses to marry. They may both starve for what I care. A pretty pair of paupers! And he's not able to do a thing for his livelihood—the fellow couldn't earn a copper at a street crossing! By all that's holy, ma'am, I'll make him smart!"

When old Sam had departed in this rage he left the lady not a little alarmed at the prospect he had held out. She knew that he was a vindictive, malevolent old man, who would find a welcome pleasure in gratifying himself in the fashion he had held out. She had always considered that there would be a "fuss" at first, and that then the usual reconciliation would follow. But she had taken no account of this element of revenge, which so often obtains in low natures, and particularly in the case of those paupers who, according to the proverb, unaccustomed to horse exercise, take their gallops in the most extravagant fashion.

It might possibly turn out as old Sam had determined it would, and then the result would be disastrous indeed. Mrs. Dawson became very thoughtful.

It was now too late—nothing could be done—and, rather ruefully, she turned to make such preparations for her Phoebe's wedding as she could contrive. These were on the simplest and most economic scale; and, indeed, the contrast struck the bridegroom, between the elaborate and magnificent toilettes which he had so lately seen Mr. Wörth's agents at work upon, and that "had-in" dressmaker, who attended at the Ebury-street rooms, to construct poor Phoebe's slender trousseau. A dismal weight seemed to oppress the whole party. Mr. Pringle, indeed, talked of the objections of his family as a matter to be removed by time, and was always alluding confidently to a period when "the governor would come round." Then they would live under the same roof-tree, and Phoebe vowed in her pretty way that she would do everything to make herself welcome to the forgiving father and mother, and consult even their slightest wish. Mr. Pringle, however, was not always in these sanguine moods; at times the disagreeable nature of his situation came back upon him with all its "horrors." Here he was, a young man of fashion and wealth, turned into a sort of Pariah; his father and mother "not speaking to him," his prospects of the most dismal kind, he himself harried and worried; and then—what he never could bear to think of an instant without a flush coming to his cheeks—that pressure which had been put upon him in Paris: the threats by which he had been compelled to take his present course. At the name of Tom his brows lowered, his mouth assumed the "sulky" look, and the shape his thoughts took was, "No matter; as they have forced me into it, they shall pay for it one day," poor Phoebe being, possibly, included in the "they."

Mrs. Dawson was skilful enough to note these signs and tokens, and bade Tom keep out of the way; also hinting to her daughter that, for good reasons, it were better not to be bringing in his name so often—advice which Phoebe followed, not without a little wonder. As the day drew near, these moods of Mr. Pringle came on more frequently, and he would have given anything that something would have "broken it all off." But Fate, taking the shape of Tom, was there inexorable; while

Phœbe, to whose slender frame joy had restored health and strength, found herself full of her old gaiety and spirits.

In this pleasant opposition of views as to so important an event, the morning of Phœbe's marriage came round. The ceremonial was a sad contrast to what it might have been under happier circumstances. There was none of the usual excitement and bustle which lend a festive air to the street itself to which the event belongs. There was no arrival of confectioners' vans, with mysterious descent of block-tin ice-pails. There were no bouquets and favours. A single carriage took them all. Breakfast speechifying there was none. And was this the vision that had been so often before Phœbe's eyes—which she had acted at the school with the girls—which she had rehearsed for herself privately when the ceremonies precedent on marriage appeared to her, as they do to every girl, the most delightful "transformation scene" in the world!

The day, too, was a gloomy one; the rain pouring down in sheets and streams. The whole party was depressed; the bridegroom could not even assume the conventional air of enjoyment. It was only the day before that he had found courage to announce the matter to his parents, with the result of a scene that was almost indecent, if not appalling; old Sam delivering what would have been a sort of malediction had it been more in form, and not helped out with so many oaths. But there was a spite and venom in his denunciations, with a "Wait and see!" added, which, for the first time, gave Mr. Pringle serious forebodings. But the watchful Tom was at hand, like the warden who never lets the tenant of the condemned cell out of his sight. To the last the faithful brother performed his duty, and when, as the phrase goes, the knot was tied, he had a word of friendly advice, rather awkwardly compounded with warning:

"Now, Pringle, our little Phœbe is yours! Take care of her, and remember this, my dear fellow, Tom Dawson will always be her brother."

Such was Phœbe's wedding-day.

There was one warm friend, however, present to see Phœbe married who had not been asked to come—they were not in heart exactly to bid guests; but when the marriage service was beginning, the white head and open mouth of Lord Garterley was seen in a pew, from which he emerged

to stand beside Phœbe. This apparition was of immense comfort to all concerned; even the bridegroom felt he was not wholly deserted. Lord Garterley saw Phœbe through it all; gave her a paternal kiss and a fervent "God bless you;" and, on parting with her at the door, pressed something into her hand which Phœbe scarcely felt, and which the watchful mother noting, and fearful lest she should lose, took charge of. On a hasty glance she saw that it was a bank-note for one hundred pounds, which she privately restored to her daughter, with the advice:

"Lock it up in your dressing-case, my pet, and say nothing to him about it."

CHAPTER XXXIII. THE PRINGLES AT HOMBURG.

The mishap that had befallen the two families caused a good deal of talk and even amusement; and the manner in which Lady Baddeley had fallen between the two stools, and thus crowned a life of blunders, was particularly relished. She struck out wildly and blindly, and almost attempted to seize on the young man with violence, "Her darling Florence being even brought to death's door," great doctors attending; but nothing could be done with the pitiless Lord Garterley.

The woman of the world was baffled, and the grenadier had to score one more defeat.

Nor were the Pringles less mortified. Everything, from the beginning down to the ball, had been going on so well, and had promised even better, that they were admitted to have made a very good "start" in fashionable life. Then came this disastrous catastrophe, which was really equivalent to a civil death. An opulent family without an heir to give in marriage, was as a Samson without his locks. The great action the public looked for from them was the hope that a husband could be here supplied for a genteel though portionless daughter. Now a sort of obloquy and contempt was spent upon them, and they were set down as low, pushing persons.

After the first shock of the marriage, they made some desperate efforts to retrieve the position. Sam attempted to give some "state dinners," as he called them, asking numbers whom he had had at his house, or to whom, by some "labours of Hercules," he had contrived an introduction. These persons were confounded by the vast card which was sure to be "served" on them within a day or two, begging the honour of their attendance at a dinner-party.

This casting of the net, however, was most disheartening—no one accepting, or, if they accepted, not coming or, as a third course—as in the case of the young men—not replying in any shape, unless the remark to a friend, “What do these people mean by asking me?” be taken as a reply.

The unhappy family were, therefore, reduced to calling in the old elements at the last moment—Lady Juliana; Mr. and Lady Cecilia Shortlands; Pratt-Hawkins—in short, some of those regulars, who are like the “orders” at theatres, to whom the manager sends tickets at the last moment when there is prospect of a thin house.

A series of these mortifications had disheartened the Samuel Pringles, and as the season was now at an end, they determined to go abroad. Lady Juliana had announced that she had no objection to be carried to Homburg, for the waters as well as for amusement; and though the Sam Pringles had shown symptoms of wishing to cast aside the crutch on which they had tottered into society, still, recent events had shown them that they were not independent of her assistance. Accordingly, preparations on a grand scale were set on foot; and with new luggage, new dresses, and new servants, mamma, papa, and the ponies started on what was for them “the grand tour.” They had made some attempts to travel in a fashionable way: that is, to find out some of the great personages who were bound for the same point. But this broke down, though one of the ponies discovered that Lord and Lady Kington, who “had been at their ball,” were actually in the train. How the family conspired and contrived during the journey—what little arts they adopted to put themselves in the way of the unconscious aristocrats—how they hovered about them with a retiring and beseeching obsequiousness, willing to accost and yet afraid to strike—made a very amusing chapter in the little history of the journey. Of course a large party thus advancing and retreating in this fashion, must have at last attracted attention; and the noble persons now on board the Calais steamer began to be mystified at the proceedings of the rather grotesque group that so dogged them. Such a number of imploring eyes watching them with smiles of tender interest made them most uncomfortable, especially when, in the ladies’ cabin, Mrs. Pringle and her ponies had again established a sort of blockade—while on deck, old Sam had,

in his own phrase, “got alongside” of the gentleman. When the noble lady in the cabin, as the sea grew rough, asked the steward near to send her maid, Mrs. Pringle fancied that the opening was given, and in wistful fashion faltered: “My maid is here, Lady Kington; and I am sure I shall be delighted. You recollect—at our house, you know—pleasure of—” This declaration was met by a cold stare, and a colder “No, thanks.” On deck, Sam, more bold, accosted the lord: “Saw you at our house, my lord, when I and Mrs. Pringle gave our ball;” which was acknowledged by a companion stare to that of the lady below, and a matter of fact “Mistake, I think; someone else.” “No, dear no,” said Sam, eagerly; and proceeded to give details in proof. “Well! Perhaps so,” said the other, and walked towards the paddle-box. This was not very encouraging. The family had only the consolation left of discovering—the news being ascertained through the servants—that the lord and lady were also bound for Homburg.

The family travelled in a sort of state, and at due expense. Mr. Batts, the butler, of whom Mrs. Pringle stood in awe, and whom she wished to discharge on leaving, had declined to accept that view, old Sam, in a monkeyish spirit, declaring that he should be kept. “Mr. Batts,” he would say before him, “is a man of the world, not to be unceremoniously treated. Is not that so, Mr. Batts?” a compliment that menial would accept with a smile of indulgence. Two footmen were also of the party, with luggage that would have almost filled a fourgon. Family plate was taken, as it had been gathered that Pratt-Hawkins and some of the supernumeraries would attend at Homburg, and opportunities for dinner-parties might arise.

Their progress was of course slow. There were halts at Brussels, Cologne, and even at Frankfort; while handsome apartments in one of the leading streets were got ready. At these chambers Lady Juliana had her maid and baggage, and it must be said that that lady of quality showed herself very peevish and even snappish while travelling. She said more disagreeable things than they had yet heard from her, and Mrs. Pringle, who knew enough of “society” to have learnt to kick away any rickety step-ladder by which she had mounted, would not have been disinclined to have got rid of the chaperon. But in old Sam, Lady Juliana found a backer, as she had contrived to lend him her moral

support in family disputes, and declared that "Mr. Pringle was a man of the world," with other compliments. In this way it was that this disagreeable personage came to be of the party, and it was understood that she was "on a visit to the Pringles," the visit dating from the time of arrival at the Victoria Station to the period of return to the same point; though even there a little fiction of taking Lady Juliana's through ticket "for her" was carried out, the lady affecting to have been caught napping, her coupons being secured, as it were, behind her back—a proceeding that she was a little indignant at.

Homburg, as all the world knows, is a very pleasant background for social recreation, the air being delightful, the amusements abundant, and the company numerous and varied. In this respect it has this peculiar feature, that it offers English liquor in a foreign bottle, and somehow everybody of note contrives to find their way there. We are now speaking of days after that period of happy memory—the suppression of the gamblers, their cards and wheels—when the place offered its own unassisted charms.

The apartments taken by the family belonged to a German baroness, who happened to be an acquaintance of Lady Juliana's, and through that lady's agency were let to the family at an enormous rent, a transaction acceptable to Mrs. Pringle only on the grounds of saving the anxieties and responsibilities of looking out for suitable accommodation, and also because it might possibly turn out to be a lever for introductions. "The baroness's apartments" would sound handsomely.

CHAPTER XXXIV. MISS LACROIX.

THE family entered Homburg with a cortège like that of a small circus, and the following morning there appeared at the springs Sam, in a grey hat and light shooting suit, which displayed his rotund figure to extraordinary disadvantage. Like new-comers in such places, they were enchanted with everything, and displayed in their faces that peculiar sort of tourist elation as though inviting all beholders to join in their pleasurable emotions, and congratulate them on having come so far. The crowds of figures, the novelty of everything, really delighted them; and the ponies were particularly pleased with the number of "gentlemen" to be seen walking about, with the charming unconstraint, that contrasted so favourably

with that stiffness and comparative weariness which distinguished the sex at home. Here must, indeed, be the happy hunting-ground for spinsters! "Mamma, mamma!" they called together, "do you see—there's Mr. Pratt-Hawkins! and see, there's Mr. Phipps!" and the family sprang forward to meet their dear friends. But Pratt-Hawkins was engaged taking two or three turns with a marquis, a triumph which had cost him a fortnight's assiduous labour to secure, and his hard-won position might be imperilled by "these people;" so they received no more than the meagre greeting of a stiff removal of Mr. Pratt-Hawkins's hat, and were coldly repelled. A little later appeared in sight the lord and lady of the journey, who glanced at them with an uncomfortable shiver, and drew closer as if fearful of an attack. But the Pringles had received a lesson, though they directed a glance to them, half reproachful, half appealing.

Still it was very delightful, and the day went by very pleasantly, though their imposed companion, Lady Juliana, was now grown sensitive, and even quarrelsome, as she saw that her "protégées"—"ungrateful pack," as she called them—were worshipping no longer. She, however, was very careless as to how they behaved, as she was likely to make out friends of her own, and, being secured now, could afford to neglect them in her turn. But still she enacted a ceremonial of respect, making them wait for her when they had to proceed to the table d'hôte or to the rooms, when, leaning on her crutch-handled stick, she was accompanied as by a retinue.

At this table d'hôte—they attended at the Victoria—old Sam, carried away by his spirits (the family at times wished heartily that this was no metaphor, and that the spirits could operate physically), commenced that fatal "clowning" which he had been conjured to leave at home. The family sat together, as is the custom, and some remark of Sam's to the effect that "the chairs seemed about as tight as the beds," having caused a smile, Sam was launched on his career of buffoonery. A young girl next to him tittered, and actually "suffocated with laughter," on the invitation and encouragement of Sam. Everyone on both sides of the long table were stretching out their heads to see who was the "droll old fellow." As it was his first visit to foreign countries, his enjoyment of all that was novel to him

was genuine—the want of salt-spoons, the German wines, &c.; and he persisted in calling for the “kellner.” “He’s an Irishman,” he said; “Kelly’s his name, depend upon it.” In short, Sam was in his highest schoolboy, or rather mudlark, spirits, “turning wheels” for the company.

What a delightful surprise when, on the next morning, down at the fountains, were revealed yet more friends! Here were the Charles Webbers, always sure to be found at the proper place—that is, where all the proper people were to be found; though they had to pinch and make sore sacrifice to accomplish so costly a journey. If by such straining the ends could not be forced to meet, they were content to forego the enjoyment altogether. Mr. Webber, resplendent in a juvenile suit of gay colours, was eminently suited to this pleasant place. Knowing everybody—and where he had been ignorant, taking care to know everybody—he was pronounced agreeable, what he said being always of a certain cheerfulness, with suitableness to the moment and to his company. Old Phipps, too, he reported, was now due, and would arrive by-and-by. In short, the Pringles, though somewhat down during the journey and on their arrival, were now quite in spirits at the prospect, and declared again and again “that Homburg was a most delightful place.” They had apartments in a house which Sam said was the colour of blotting-paper, towards the middle of the fashionable Kiesseleff-street; the royal duke, as Pratt-Hawkins told them, lodging only a few doors lower down; while actually, on the floor underneath, were Sir John and Lady Minerer, with Miss Lacroix, who was staying with them.

Sir John was a thin, mild husband, while his lady was a portly, shrewish personage, who said and did what she thought. Having “taken in” or captured Sir John on the high seas of flirtation, and not being “exactly, you know” of the same position, she was not comfortable among persons of the same rank, though extremely so in the company of those of lower degree. She was a loud-voiced, noisy lady, and if it were not disrespectful to say so, might be called a sort of genteel fishwoman as regards her language. She was always engaged in disputes with “the people of the house” on small matters of domestic economy, into which Sir John, a small spare being, quite unsuited to such conflicts, was drawn.

Of course such contiguity was a per-

petual challenge to acquaintance for the Pringles. Mrs. Pringle had used, and used in vain, the shrinking, timorous device, the accidental meeting on the stairs, when, with reverential and smiling lips that formed visual though inarticulate words, she seemed to invite intercourse. The stout Lady Minerer, who was gouty, and walked with labour, was too much engrossed in getting herself into her rooms. It was reserved for Sam to break the ice, as it is called. Sam had taken due notice of “the fine girl that was below,” and when he found the opportunity, conveyed his admiration in sundry ogles. One evening a number of substantial bouquets, ordered by the Pringle family for the decoration of the room—they had seen the same in the rooms of a lady of rank—were left in the hall, and attracted Lady Minerer’s admiration. She was very fond of flowers, and entered into conversation with Mr. Batts, who was about to convey them upstairs. She had a sort of respect for this official and his reserved manner, and often thus communed with him. She had just exclaimed that “they were lovely, and that she wished that she could get them to send her some”—which they never would, her ladyship being excessively stingy in the matter of price—when the voice of Sam was heard behind, subdued to a rich emolliency: “Am sure, Lady Minerer, delighted—if you’d ‘low me to offer ‘em at your shrine. Let me have ‘em taken in to your room! Or would you—” and he put one into the hand of Lady Minerer, the other in that of Miss Lacroix. There was an old-fashioned gallantry in the operation with which her ladyship was pleased. Sam was invited in, carrying, as he entered, the rest of the flowers, and was found amusing enough, his vein and her ladyship’s being of about equal coarseness. Need we say that Sam was not found fault with for his purchase of this acquaintance, at so comparatively small an outlay; and that from that day forth the new relationship was fortified by a shower of choice floral offerings, Mr. Batts usually appearing in charge of the nosegays, with many a “Mrs. Pringle’s compliments, my lady, with these flowers, and hopes you’d do her the honour to accept of ‘em.” Mrs. Pringle and the ponies were presently introduced, on the stairs, and Lady Minerer received them into the number of her dependents with as much graciousness as she could put on.

From that time the intimacy was firmly cemented, and became even violent, the ponies waiting on Lady Minerer like two handmaidens, and the whole family attending, when she went forth at the fashionable hours to hear the music. When this retinue appeared on the terrace in front of the Cure House, there was excitement; in other words, they disturbed a great many persons, in selecting "a suitable spot for encampment, while Sir John and Sam went to collect chairs. Then there followed coffee; while Sam, whose patent of appointment as jester in ordinary to Homberg was by this time regularly made out, gave due license to his vein, and attracted all ears within the area to which the human voice can carry, by his loud laugh and noisy buffooneries.

Mention has been made of the lady, Miss Lacroix, who was set down as "the personal attendant" of the great lady, though indeed her relation to her seemed not a little mysterious. Her quiet independence of manner, and the assured character of her position, was inconsistent with the idea of a "dame de compagnie," Lady Minerer herself saying that Miss Lacroix was travelling with them. There was something, too, in her that made every one look two or three times at her. She had one of those smooth, well-shaped heads, her hair fitting tight like a cap, though not thin, but certainly contrasting with the "rich matted tresses" which are ordinarily ranked among the glories of the sex. People remarked in her face a very thoughtful, inquiring look, which was really habitual with her, and which seemed to be excited by every remark that was made to her. Her own speeches were of a piquant, half-satirical kind, that attracted. Her face was not handsome, nor even pretty, but exceedingly intelligent. She gave the idea of wishing to please; she said nothing that was ill-natured; yet the gentlemen felt a little reserve in her presence, and the ladies not the usual cordiality with which they accepted persons of their own sex. This, no doubt, owing to an idea that "her papers seemed hardly en règle"—as, indeed, is more or less the case with those who embark alone on the waters of society, sculling their little skiffs alone, themselves the only crew. It seems strange that people should be inquisitive in the case of such navigation, asking how and when the rower got on board; where she is going; and, in fact, why she was thus engaged at all—whereas even a "pair-

"oared" boat, pulled by, say, a mother and daughter, a husband and wife, should be accepted. But this serious and unreasonable disability undoubtedly obtains, and was in force even at such a place as Homberg. Miss Lacroix, however, enjoyed all that was going on very much, and contributed to the pastime of the agreeable Capua where she was. The Pringles soon discovered that Lady Minerer found her account in this companionship; many elderly ladies of fashion being pleased to have an attractive aide-de-camp at their side. So do the wary moneylenders insist on their young client taking, as part of the proceeds of a bill, a parcel of undrinkable wine, an old picture, or still older gig, as makeweight to the more acceptable cash. In this case Miss Adelaide Lacroix may be presumed to be the cash.

SPIELBAD-SUPER-MARE.

Is it really my deliberate opinion that there is money to be made at "the tables?" It is. Then why do I not go and make it? Ah! that is exactly the question I have been asking myself just now—not for the first time—all the way home.

Why the smell of a kidney sauté au vin de Madère should carry me, as on Shacabac's carpet, straight away to Spielbad-super-Mare I cannot say. But so it is. As I walked home just now, I passed by an open window. It was a real English spring evening. The thermometer—to judge from one's feelings—must have been somewhere in the neighbourhood of zero. But it was not exactly freezing. The wet was coming down in little wriggling lumps. But you couldn't quite say it was snowing. The brown gas-jets gloomed at you through a layer of thicker brownness, which perhaps you would hardly be justified in dignifying with the name of fog. At the window stood what seemed the ghost of a pale stout man, dressed, as ghosts should be, all in white, and called over its shoulder to a fellow ghost to "Behold then a dog of weather! sacred blue! but a dog!" Then, with a shudder, he, or it, slammed down the window, and returned to his steaming casseroles. But even as he did so, the fragrance of a "jumped kidney" came leaping out, and in a moment I was a thousand miles away.

Spielbad-super-Mare. At Christmas time. But with much less suggestion of "Christmas" about it than about that Lon-

don spring evening under which I was cultivating the rheumatics a second or two ago. There is a freshness in the air; but it is the freshness of June, not of December. The blue sea glitters oilily, with scarce a ripple even around the very edge of the warm red rocks. The big mountains behind me tower into the heavens, but there is no more hint of snow on the loftiest of their bald crowns than in the clear blue sky itself. Ripe yellow oranges and lemons are piled up all around, not in mouldy Covent-garden baskets, but on the green boughs of their own native trees. Over my head a feathery palm is already beginning to thrust out those quaint little unconnected strings of dates which are by-and-by to redeem its character in utilitarian eyes. The marble terrace is ablaze with huge masses of scarlet geranium, and fragrant with heliotrope and rose. In the garden beyond the prickly pears attitudinise pre-Raffaelitically, spreading out their broad fat paws to the sun; which luminary himself has clearly no idea of indulging in any Christmas holiday, and is flaming away as if it were midsummer.

It is three in the afternoon, and, from the open windows of the concert-room, the strains of the Kursaal band come floating out upon the scented air. By-and-by the marble terrace will be gayer than ever, with rainbow silks and sheeny satins, and glittering miles upon miles of the gold and silver lace, with which it seems to be de rigueur just now that some part at least of every lady's dress shall gleam and glare. But for the moment everyone not wedged into one or other of the five closely-packed little crowds which surround the tables, is in the concert-room listening to the music; and, with one exception, Count Carambole and I have the marble terrace to ourselves.

A Russian princess? Well, I think so. I don't know whether you have observed it, but to me it always seems as though the nature and amount of people's "wraps" depended a good deal more upon the climate they have left, than upon that they may at the time be in. An Englishman will as soon part from his chimney-pot hat and his great-coat and his railway rug, as a snail from its shell, or a War-office clerk from his umbrella. Your Italian or your Spaniard will bury his muzzle in his cloak at sunset, in Leicester-square, just as he has been accustomed to bury it in Seville or in Naples, where sunset was an appreciable event. Your mild Hindoo will glide

half-naked through a northern January, shivering but satisfied. I don't remember ever to have met an Esquimaux in Madras or Trincomalee, but if I were to meet one in either of those places, I should be much surprised not to find him swaddled to the eyebrows in fur. The tall young woman with golden hair, leaning pensively against the marble balustrade is certainly not an Esquimaux. But she might almost be one from a furred point of view. The sweeping cream-white silk which trails along the terrace a yard or two behind her, is trimmed with sable eighteen inches deep. The delicately-gloved hands peep out from their sable cuffs, only to bury themselves in the inmost recesses of a coquettish little sable muff. A sable boa encircles closely the "round white pillar of her throat." The golden locks are crowned with a maddening little sable "pork pie." There is sable on the very parasol, whose turquoise-studded handle matches gorgeously the great brooch which just peeps out from under the fur, and the golden bands that clasp the ivory wrists and slender waist. Altogether the lady by the balustrade must carry, as Count Carambole phrases it, for something like two or three thousand louis of turquoises and fur. And for that which concerns the fur and the turquoises, as he informs me, my conjecture is perfectly correct. They are all that there is of most Russian, as Prince Asteriskokoff can bear witness; or, for the matter of that, the Princess Asteriskokoff either, who has made him more than one scene, my dear, in that regard. But for the Dame aux Turquoises! The count shakes his head and smiles. A Russian? She? But yes—of the Bréda quarter. A princess of the gallant Bohemia. There are a good many princesses of that stock at Spielbad-super-Mare. This one has been here a month now; in effect ever since—but no matter. He has ranged himself, that poor prince, and all is finished. And for mademoiselle, she has not made her brain leap, as thou seest, and she has played—ah! my faith, but played!

In effect the count is of opinion that, before many days are out, the turquoises and sables of Princess Asteriskokoff will be in the market once more. Perhaps she is at this moment making up her mind to the sacrifice. Perhaps she is only meditating some fresh combination; some coup more infallible than ever, by which the one five-hundred-franc note which is still left her, and which certainly would not go far

towards liquidating her bill at the grand hotel of Lutetia over the way, may yet be made to retrieve her fortunes. It looks, indeed, as though the latter were the case, for the solitary note is taken out and opened, and folded up again and opened again, only to be again refolded in slightly different fashion. And then, as for the third time she smoothes it out upon the marble balustrade, there comes fluttering down upon it from the vase of geraniums at her elbow a little scarlet leaf. *

It requires but a very superficial acquaintance with the manners and customs of Bohemian princesses at Spielbad-super-Mare to penetrate the meaning of the sudden air of decision with which the solitary note is now refolded for the last time, or to guess in what direction its fair owner's steps will at once be turned, or with what intent. In five minutes more she is at the table of the trente-et-quarante, and the five-hundred-franc note is lying on the very centre of the little red lozenge from around which the croupier's rake has just swept a goodly sheaf of others like it. "Le jeu est fait. Rien ne va plus. Quatre-deux. Rouge gagne et couleur." The augury holds good so far at all events, and Count Carambole opines that the little one is entering upon a vein, and gives me, sotto voce, a long list of similar happy inspirations which have occurred to himself. Your true punter is always a firm believer in inspirations of this kind. I have known men play the number of "little breads" sent up to them at breakfast; the "odd or even" of the pieces in the little pile of change remaining from their bill; the colour of the magnificent scarlet jacket which dazzled them, on the shoulders of a lady they have seen in the railway carriage. In the good old days, before the sensitive virtue of victorious Berlin decreed that, from a roulette or trente-et-quarante point of view, the Rhineland cakes and ale should be no more, there was a story current at my favourite little gambling-place, Sitzbad-bei-die-Saltzbrunnen. As a rule, it was popularly supposed that no one ever lost at Sitzbad but the bank. However, one unlucky punter at least had managed on this occasion to break through the tradition, and had lost, with the exception of a solitary *frederick*, every farthing he owned. That he should carry this solitary *frederick* fairly away was, of course, not to be imagined. Our friend had left the table with that intention, however, and had got

as far as the hall. There he was seen suddenly to stop. It was a wet day, and the gorgeously-liveried footmen of the establishment were hiding the light of their silken calves under the bushel of their drab gaiters. Upon one of these the unlucky one was observed to fix his eyes; then turning on his heel he strode swiftly back to the table, and, as the very words "Rien ne va plus" came from the croupier's lips, slapped down his last *louis* on the fourteen. For another instant or two the little ball hopped hesitatingly from stud to stud; then, settled in its selected cell, was duly proclaimed, in good Rhineland French, as "Gadorze. Rouche, bair et manque." But our friend's faith in the augury, whatever it might be, was not satisfied with so small a triumph; and this time, as he is playing, as the saying goes, with the bank's own money, he can afford to "plunge" a little. So he draws off only four-and-twenty of his little pile of *louis*, and leaves the maximum on the table. "Gadorze!" again, and his *louis* has become four hundred and twenty-one *louis*. A third trial produces a similar result, and a conviction is fast spreading that he has only to leave his eleven *louis* there to ensure a series of "gadorzes" for the rest of the afternoon, or at all events till the bank shall break. There is quite a murmur of reprobation when he is seen to be seized with a sudden fit of prudence. But our friend has been fascinated by the symmetry of the round eight hundred *louis*, and persists in staking only the odd half-dozen. So "of course" the luck changes, and "drente-cinq, noir, imbar et basse" sweeps the timid six *louis* back into the bank again. However, six hundred and forty pounds is not a bad profit to realise in about two minutes and a half upon a capital of sixteen shillings, and there is a natural desire to learn the inspiration on which it has been achieved. Nothing loath the triumphant winner proudly explains. His downcast eye had been, it appears, suddenly struck by the bright buttons upon the footman's gaiters. In pure absence of mind he began to count them. Fourteen. And there you are.

My Bohemio-Russian princess does not seem disposed to balk her luck by any means. "Over a hundred and twenty thousand francs!" whispers one British matron at my elbow to another, who shakes her head in virtuous reprobation, frowning majestically at Count Carambole, as she hastily pops back into her pocket the five-franc piece

with which she has been fidgeting these ten minutes, and to which, with a malicious grin, the wicked count has just directed my attention. For a moment the grin widens, then disappears with pantomime suddenness as he follows the British matron's example, and draws hastily back the little handful of louis, with which he was about once more to back the luck of the fair adventuress. Another whisper has just come round—a fatal whisper. The princess has named the sum at which she means to stop. She will win back her hundred and fifty thousand francs, and go away. My faith! that suffices. The count's interest in the affair is over.

When I bring out my great work *On the Morbid Anatomy of the Prophetical Function*, I mean to devote a chapter to the superstitions of Spielbad; and it will not be the shortest chapter of that invaluable work, nor the least curious. In this particular superstition I have myself the profoundest faith: and not without reason. I had a venerable relation once, as excellent a man as ever worshipped at the shrine of the great goddess Fortune, and with a pleasant habit of changing the subject when the goddess had frowned upon his offering, and enriching my balance at Messrs. Pennywise and Shovelout's with a large proportion of the golden results of her smiles. To him occurred one day the idea of making up a little sum of five hundred pounds, to be placed to my account with Messrs. P. and S., as a pleasant surprise for Christmas. And a more admirable idea it would, perhaps, be difficult to conceive, or one more worthy of being successfully carried out. But alas! it had one flaw. It fixed beforehand the point at which the goddess's favour would cease to be courted. And the goddess was a feminine goddess, and wouldn't stand that. For more than seven weeks my good old friend played on splendidly. He had already "rolled up" something over four hundred and eighty-five pounds. Another day, and the thing would be done. Would it? Had he haunted the temple so long only to suppose that the goddess would stand being deliberately flirted with in that way? The last day came, and turned out a last day with a vengeance. Instead of winning he began to lose. But that was nothing, for of course one must lose sometimes. The mischief of it was that now he went on losing. First fifty louis, then a hundred, then a hundred more, then his temper, then his head; then the

whole of the famous four hundred and eighty-five pounds, then about two hundred and fifty pounds of his own to the back of it; then—well, then luckily his account with the local bankers dried up, and he had himself to write to Messrs. Pennywise and Shovelout for fresh supplies. Not that the local bankers would not gladly have advanced him any amount he liked to name. But he had promised himself, years ago, never to borrow, and he wouldn't break his word, even to himself, and when he was in a passion. So he went home and had a fit of the gout, which kept him fully occupied till the fresh remittances came, and for some days after. And by the time it passed, he had recovered his head and his temper, and took soberly to playing silver again, and to winning, as, when he played silver, he always did; as surely as he always lost when he played gold. My own firm conviction is, that if he had always played silver, and left off for the day the moment he lost his first gold piece, he would have doubled his income easily.

When to leave off? Aye, there's the rub. You would know well enough? Of course you would, my dear sir. I never yet knew anyone sit down to play who didn't know it; any more than I ever knew one who, when the "*déveine*" had once fairly set in, had the faintest idea of putting that piece of exceedingly useful knowledge into practice. My friend, the high and well-born young Baron von K—, knew when to stop, for I told him, when he persuaded me—me!—to let him join forces in one of my earliest campaigns, a year or two before the war. He was an officer of Prussian artillery was the Baron von K—, son of another high and well-born baron, high up in the Prussian diplomatic service; and he had been flinging his money about the table right and left, and winning wherever he flung it. Presently the *déveine* came, and our baron lost as usual, not only all his winnings, but the greater part of his own private supplies, which, as he was under engagement to proceed to England on very interesting business, was rather a serious matter. I had been playing my quiet jog-trot game the while, and had put together a pretty little packet of some seven or eight thousand franc notes; and having taken a sort of liking for the young baron, who, for a Prussian, was really rather a pleasant fellow, consented readily enough to his proposal. So the bargain was struck. The two capitals

were to be joined. The high and well-born one pledged himself to play only in strict accordance with my instructions, and we were to share our winnings in due proportion. Our winnings! Ha, ha! The very next morning I took my turn, played till the run was exhausted, and there was nothing to do but wait till another opening offered, and left my high and well-born one in possession of the field. He was to do nothing till a certain combination arose, then to put on one florin, then two, and so on. Privately, I did not think it likely that such a combination would arise for some time. I took my walk—a short one, for I was not easy in my mind—and returned : to find the high and well-born one very serious, and a little white about the gills, pushing on to the table a handful of golden fredericks. And then I knew what had happened. I was too late to save another dozen or so of fredericks from following their companions into the bank ; but, before a third batch could be imperilled, I had succeeded in withdrawing my faithful colleague from the table, and in extracting from him the painfully superfluous explanation of what had come to pass. He was very sorry. He really had not had patience to wait any longer, and—he had lost it all. I was very young then for my years, and for some time I cherished the idea that when the high and well-born one came to think over the transaction, he would, perhaps, be moved to make some restitution. Ha, ha! once more.

After the tragedy, the farce. One would think that if anyone would know when to stop it would be "old Blong"—I think my compatriots generally know him as "old Blong"—himself. Did you ever hear how that famous brown silk parasol of Madame Blong's came to cost him eight hundred pounds? It was not a very valuable one, as you will guess, when I tell you that at Madame Requin's, of Rouletten-bad, they only asked three louis for it; and it is rarely indeed, as all the world knows, that Madame Requin condescends to sell anything under five. However, M. Blong thought three louis too much to give for half a yard of brown silk on a plain lance-wood handle, merely because madame had left her own parasol at home. So, like a prudent man, he strolled into the Kursaal—not to play, of course—merely to extract from the bank of the opposition establishment the sixty francs required to meet this unlooked-for expense. This was about three o'clock in the after-

noon, and he had only twenty thousand francs about him: but it was nearly dinner-time before he had lost it all.

And in spite of all this, I still maintain that there is money to be made at the tables? Precisely so. In spite of all that, and a great deal more than all that, I still maintain that there is a good deal of money to be made at the tables. Not large fortunes. Not colossal coups, such as we hear of every now and again. Not such a return by any means as would satisfy, or would have satisfied in the palmy days a year or two ago, a City financier, or a launcher of foreign loans. Not any return at all upon a big capital. M. Blong's maximum guards him against that. Simply a few modest hundreds per cent. upon a modest little capital well short of "four figures." Can I show you how to do it? No. I don't suppose I can, as you will see by-and-by. But I can tell you my reasons, which are twofold.

First, theoretical. The chances in favour of the bank, on any single coup, are something less than three per cent. One point in thirty-six. There is the maximum of course, which, as I have already said, is an effective bar against scientific operations on a large scale. But that is all, and to set against this you have the power of adapting your stake, within the prescribed limits, to the circumstances of the game, and the absolute liberty either of selecting the special chance on which you will risk it, or of refraining, when for the time fortune declares against you, from risking any more. I believe that power—if you exercise it, as of course you don't, and won't, and couldn't if you would—I believe that power, I say, to be worth more than three per cent.; and I am confirmed in my belief by my second reason, which is practical. I have studied the tables now closely for a good many seasons. For three of them I played pretty regularly; on an average, I should say, at least five days in the week, realising each season a handsome ultimate profit. During the others I have not played, but I have amused myself constantly by noting the play, and always with the same result.

Then why, you ask again, do I not "go in and win?" I'll tell you. For precisely the same reason which, when I do go in, results in my winning. I have an insuperable dislike to gambling. Conscientious? Not in the least. A question of temperament pure and simple. One hears people

constantly saying: "Oh! I don't care to play high, you know, but one must have something on, just to give it an interest." Now with me it is precisely the reverse. I have played "for love" at euchre, that most gambling of all games not purely of chance, from six o'clock one evening to two o'clock the next afternoon; and I flatter myself my friend and I considerably astonished the two "Western men," who had begun by being so amused at the audacity of a New Yorker and a Britisher setting up to play euchre. But the moment I have a penny piece upon a game, all pleasure in it is lost. I am not a "screw." I can spend my money—when I have any—as freely as most men. In proportion to my opportunities, I have wasted—so my friends say—rather more than most. I can even give, sometimes, without an absolute pang. And as for lending—well, despite the good advice of old Polonius, I suppose most of us, could they only get in once more one half the bread they have cast upon the waters of friendship in that way, would have but little need of the baker for many days to come. But for risking anything—a kreutzer or a centime or a rei—I have a constitutional aversion, which several seasons' experience of the tables has not lessened but confirmed. Perhaps if I had "luck"—if I could do, for instance, as a young friend of mine did the other day—it might be otherwise. When he arrived at Spielbad he had never seen a roulette-table in his life. It was quite early in the season, and there were scarcely any players or even spectators at the solitary table where the little ball was already running merrily round, as he walked quickly up to the centre of it, and laid down his louis on the nearest number; which happened to be the three. "Combiang je gainerai," he demanded of the presiding flamen, who glanced at him, then at the square to which he was pointing, and on which gleamed the solitary golden offering on the table, and replied, all in a breath, and in that slightly melancholy monotone in which the perennial matins and evensong of that popular culte is commonly celebrated, "Vous êtes en plein, monsieur? Le trois? Vous gagnerez trente-cinq louis. Rien ne va plus. Trois. Rouge, impair et manque. Vous avez gagné, monsieur. Trente-cinq louis. Messieurs, faites le jeu." But that kind of luck is not my kind of luck at all. Very much otherwise. So I have no overweening anticipation of winning

to prick the flagging sides of my intent, and my natural antipathy to gambling has it all its own way. During those first three seasons, my good old friend, under whose hospitable roof they were passed, and who—not being by any means of a similar temperament—could not bear to see anyone within reach of the tables and not playing, would push me over a handful of louis from his own winnings with a half impatient: "Here, man alive! go and play these for me." "And suppose I lose them?" "All right, then I must win them back again. Besides, they aren't mine, you know. I've only borrowed them of old Blong"—which, no doubt, was perfectly true. And on those terms I would play them boldly enough. But my good old friend has played his own last stake now some years since, and my gambling days are over.

So there you have the secret at last, and much satisfaction may it give you. If you have the smallest liking for play you may reckon with tolerable certainty upon sooner or later losing—whatever you have got to lose. If you have not, you may with a good system, a large stock of patience and a strong self-control, reckon, as I believe, with almost equal certainty on doubling it, say once in a month or six weeks. As for the system itself, most systems are good, more or less, for a time. No system which pretends to more, or which does not include as one of its own most essential features, an inexorable provision for early collapse, is worth the card upon which it is pricked. Of course the first system which suggests itself to the beginner is that obviously "infallible" method of the martingale pure and simple—the just doubling your stake every time till you win. Of course, also, it is precisely the system most effectively combining the minimum of profit with the maximum of risk.

Still, it is on a modification of this system that the bank wins three hundred and sixty-four days in every year; in leap-year three hundred and sixty-five. And it is on a modification of this system that my own is constructed. Will I tell you what it is? No, gentle reader, I will not. You would only go and lose your money, and then turn round and abuse me for having led you astray. Besides, if you have not laid to heart all that I have told you already, you do not deserve that I should tell you any more. If you have, you will have already learned two things. First, that it is not the system that wins, but the person who

works it. Second, that if you were one of those persons by whom it could be worked with success, you would not care to know anything about it. However, I will tell you the very simple principles on which it is based, and you can then construct a system for yourself—always supposing that you have wit enough for the operation, and not too much to engage in it.

First, then, you may be quite sure that, by the inexorable laws of chances, every chance on either table will, in the long run, duly turn up its proportionate number of times. Secondly, you may be equally sure that, in the short run, they will do nothing of the kind. Practically you will find that they, one and all, advance and retire in little irregular tides. Now one will be in vogue for a time—a short time or a long, an hour perhaps, or a day, or a week; now it will retire into obscurity again, and its opposite neighbours will make the running, and recover the lost ground. Your system, then, must have two qualifications. The first, to turn to the best advantage the particular current which may be at the moment affecting the particular chance you may have selected for experiment. The second, to tumble to pieces of its own accord, the moment the current has fairly turned. The cunningest modification of the martingale makes its gains slowly and small; rolls up its losses like a snowball on a hill-side. Its value will be in exact proportion to its power, not of winning, but of cutting short a loss.

A third requirement can be supplied only by yourself. It is that of recognising and accommodating yourself to those far more difficult, as well as more dangerous, tides which affect the fortunes, not of individual chances, but of banks and of men. Laugh if you like; but there are, none the less, days in the life of every man in which—play what he please—he cannot win. As surely as there is a time to laugh and a time to weep, a time to be born and a time to die, so, also, is there a time to win and a time to lose all that you have won, and probably a good deal more. What it is that governs those times I can no more tell you than I can tell you what it is which to-day makes the red turn up eight times out of twelve, or to-morrow will give you a whole day's play without a *zéro* from noon to midnight. But, whatever it may or may not depend upon, you may, at all events, thoroughly depend upon it; for so it is. And the bank has its days of "*déveine*" too—days when everybody wins and in-

spectors' faces lengthen, and silk-calved footmen have to be despatched to the disgusted treasury for fresh supplies; but there is this difference between the *déveine* of the bank and the *déveine* of the punter. The former gets noised abroad, and everybody rushes to avail himself of it, arriving, of course, when the *déveine* is over, just in time to swell the stakes, out of which the recovered fortune of the bank is to recoup itself, half-a-dozen-fold, for all its losses. If your punter would select the day after his ill luck is over, he might "plunge" to some good end. But then he would not be a punter.

Finally, if, when your system shall have been duly and scientifically elaborated, and have borne the test of any amount of calculation in pen and ink, you feel quite sure that you would rather go on plodding up your little yearly hundreds from among your briefs, or your prescriptions, or your leading articles, than incur the worry of turning them into thousands by its use, you may have, if you like, the satisfaction of knowing that, on condition of so feeling, such a transmutation is most probably quite within your power. If, on the other hand, you really do feel a strong inclination to subject your newly-constructed system to the actual practical test of silver and gold, your best plan of proceeding is unquestionably this. Convert the whole of whatever sum you intend to devote to the purpose, with as much more as you can at the moment lay your hands on, into notes—English bank-notes are the best, but London and Westminster circulars, or, indeed, any kind of good paper, will answer the purpose. Take a careful list of dates and numbers. Put your initials, if you like, as an additional security, in the right-hand top-corner of each. Then fold the whole, lightly, twice across; put them, list and all, into the fire, or the Emma Mine, or any other investment of that kind, from which they are quite certain never to re-emerge, and thank your stars, and me, for having saved you the pang of seeing them raked in, one by one, across the treacherous green tables of beautiful Spielbad-super-Mare.

LILIES.

IN MEMORIAM.

THE west has lost its golden glow,
The tall white lilac stand arow
Behind the beds of musk;
The woodbine climbs the garden rail,
And in the copse the nightingale
Is singing through the dusk.

We stand beside the cedar tree,
We mark, as far as eyes can see,
Our garden's utmost bound;
The level lawn, the beds of bloom,
The elms beyond the hedge of broom,
And all is hallowed ground.

We pace the bordered garden walk,
Where best she loved to play and talk
About the bees and flowers;
Among the lilies she would sit,
Or, lily-like, beside them sit
The long sunshiny hours.

Full oft we wove them for a crown
To deck the ringlets, chestnut-brown,
That on her shoulders strayed.
Ah, Heaven! how fond, how blind we were,
We thought her more than earthly fair,
And yet were not afraid.

We might have known a soul so white
Was God's, was Heaven's, by holy right,
And never could be ours;

We might have known we could not keep
The child whose thoughts were grave and deep,
And pure as lily flowers.

Too good, too fair, too pure for us,
But when keen anguish pierces thus,
The bleeding heart will faint;
And we must madly wish awhile
That she could barter for our smile
The palm-branch of the saint.

We cannot say we feel it best
That she was taken from our breast,
While such hot pulses stir;
And thinking of the new-turned sod,
We cannot, all at once, thank God,
That he has gathered her.

We can but look with bitter tears
Backward and forward o'er the years.
God's will our life has crossed!
We can but let that will be done,
We can but pray that she has won
Far more than we have lost.

God may be good to us, and give
Such comfort as will let us live
In peace from day to day;
But joy will only dawn that hour
Wherein we see our lily flower
In regions far away.

CRUELTY TO ANIMALS.

THERE is great virtue in—some—initial letters. They are brief; they are expressive; they prevent an immensity of vocal syllabic expenditure, and have, in course of time, saved the "setting up" of many a thousand miles of every variety of type. What is in a name? is a question that has, more than once, been put. There should be very little in it, for a certainty, if it is to be spoken or written very frequently; and this shall be our excuse for abbreviating the name of the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals to the initials of R. S. P. C. A. throughout the present review of its aims and proceedings.

It is pleasant to be able to record, at the very onset, that the abnormal length

of its name is the only fault we have to find with this very humane society. Its scope, its aims, its endeavours, its genuine life and performances—far too little comprehended by the general public—are so admirable, that they will give, on nearer acquaintance, the warmest satisfaction, and a considerable amount of interest and surprise.

It is, indeed, only necessary to enter the spacious and well-ordered board-room of the institution building to be interested in the work of the society, and in its method of setting about it. The eye is at once caught by a series of specimen handbills, spread upon a narrow counter or table that surrounds the room; and as these handbills form as efficient a catalogue as need be of the doings (in one department) of the society, a few items from them shall be quoted. "To Cat Worriers," reads one, in large blue letters; and it sets forth how a man had two months' hard labour in prison for setting a bull-dog at a cat to torture and worry her. "Poisoning Sundry Cats," is another bill, calling vigorously for attention. Others attack the acts of bleeding calves; laming cows by stick; furiously beating animals in stables; ill-treating saddle-donkeys; cruelty at cattle-markets; driving oxen unfit to travel; over-riding goats and ponies; working infirm and worn-out horses; working horses bearing old wounds; shearing sheep too soon or too near the skin; overloading vans, so that it is agony to horses to draw them; using stick, prod, knife, whip, rope,—anything, to cause mental or bodily torture, anywhere. Another bill hopes "that the public will co-operate with the society to obtain a kind consideration for the dumb creatures who faithfully minister to man's wants and comforts." And others are: "It hoped the public will co-operate with the society in suppressing offences;" "Persons witnessing acts of cruelty are requested to report the same;" "The public are earnestly invited to forward information to the Secretary of all offences, when advice and assistance will be given;" "The public are earnestly invited to refuse to ride in any carriage drawn by a horse in an unfit condition;" "It is hoped that drovers, railway servants, husbandmen, drivers, and all who have the care of animals, will perform their duties with self-control, patience, and a kind consideration;" and "The undersigned"—John Colam, Secretary—"in publishing to all whom it may con-

cern the duty which statutory provisions impose upon him, would earnestly appeal to the humanity of consignors, carriers, and consignees, or other persons, to make needful and effectual arrangements in the conduct of their businesses, so that the transit of animals by railway, steamboat, and road may no longer be a reproach to those engaged therein, and that it may be unnecessary to put into operation "any penal Act of Parliament, prosecution, punishment, pain, penalty, hitherto fore by cruelty, thoughtlessness, and ignorance required. Now, this moving, this strenuous, this incessant appeal to the mercy, the pity, the whole of the better feelings of humanity, is the noblest and the proudest work the society can ever hope to get done. It is no triumph to the committee of management—men of large heart and open and ready ear—to prosecute; it is no congratulatory matter to them that so many cowardly assaulters and maltreaters have been taken red-handed, and sentenced to the proper penalty for their sin. The work the committee wish to do, the work to which their most constant efforts are bent, is that all ill-treatment, all suffering by neglect, shall be for evermore prevented.

The R.S.P.C.A., however, exists in no Utopia; and it knows it.

Turning to the opposite side of the Jermyn-street board-room, acquaintance may be made with a second vast and important domain in which the society is successfully working. Slaughter may be the broad name given to this—slaughter, the mode of it, and the implements by which it is to be carried out. Killing must be done, R.S.P.C.A., of course, acknowledges; flinging maudlin sentimentality to the winds, and accepting fact freely and without hesitation. Animal food is essential to the proper sustenance of man, whatever vegetarians may say; life must be taken for the animal food to be obtained. This is a firm and solid truth; and the society looks into its face, and takes note of all the conditions of it, as solidly and firmly as the truth of it itself. The killing has to be. But let there be heed that, in the killing, there be no agony; no wanton prolongation; no brutal, merciless cruelty and torture.

This is noble ground for the committee to occupy. It is a noble banner to raise; the more so as it entails visits, surveillance,

neighbourhood inquiries, personal inspection, witnessing and testimony, that must be revolting to men who have at heart the prevention of cruelty at all, and that must disclose scenes and circumstances from which even ordinary minds would shrink. But though there must be recoil here, to their work the committee bravely stand. On their shelves lie specimens of pole-axes that are bad for use, and pole-axes that are good. The desiderata are that an implement should kill its victim at one blow; that this one blow should stun—should be, in effect, an anaesthetic, preventing consciousness or pain; and the weapon the society can best approve is a steel tube, the length of a finger, the circumference of a shilling, that is hit at once into the poor beast's brain by means of a heavy mallet and a spring. This pole-axe is known as Wackett's; and the spring to it is an invention to secure, and that does secure, precision of aim. There is proof of this lying on the shelf by its side. A board has fixed to it a row of perforated skulls—just a section of the skulls, being a sawn piece, a small finger's-breadth, out of the very centre of the victims' foreheads. These skulls display the one clean hole that had thrust out life, verily as a spark, and felled the animal dead. The society wishes for something more, however, than this rapid and merciful despatch. It wants to save the terror of the victim on being led into the sight and smell of the shambles; to which end it has appointed a small committee of gentlemen, to visit slaughter-houses, and be present at slayings, that they may report upon them, and know from experience what it is best to suggest. A custom prevails in France of blindfolding the oxen, so that they may see neither place nor executioner. It is done by a large black leather mask—the society has a sample—to be strapped and buckled tightly on, and which has the spring pole-axe already attached, requiring only the mallet to give the coup de grâce. Unluckily, the terror of the mask is as great to an English ox as the terror the society is labouring to avoid. It was at first thought this might be due to the delay of fastening the straps; and Mr. Baxter invented his improved mask—also in the society's room—to be clapped suddenly upon the face, and kept there with powerful side-springs. There was the same difficulty to get at the ox, and to seize him in the exact attitude that the mask would fit. At last the fact was discovered

to be that the English oxen are not like their oxen cousins across the Channel. These cousins (German and otherwise) are accustomed to harness; they toil on in front of the plough, the cart, the harrow, as their solid inheritance; to them it is nothing to have the Hans or the Pierre of their acquaintance approach them with a leathern accoutrement, and come closely up. With the English oxen, all this is changed; and the society had to lay the mask aside. They have a short thick dagger, with which death could be dealt in an instant, supposing the right spot could be hit. The dagger has had to share the fate of the mask, though; since the chances were all against hitting the right spot, and to a helter-skelter slaughter, five or six stabs in succession, the society could never give its sanction.

Spring-traps are other implements, specimens of which are lying beside the pole-axes in the Jermyn-street board-room. In these, with apparent barbarity, but with most real consistency, the R.S.P.C.A. seek for slaughter, where gamekeepers and landlords only try to maim. Invent a trap that shall kill at once, is the demand issuing from Jermyn-street. Do not use spring-traps that shall only catch a bird, or a fox, or a hare, or a rabbit, and that shall leave it there broken-limbed, to struggle and suffer, and finally to starve. The orders given to gamekeepers are, truly, that a visit be paid to all the traps every morning, and that then all the wounded captives shall be killed; in the press of work, however, in the miles that would want traversing, these orders are not strictly obeyed, and two days, and even three days, pass, with the animals slowly starving, yet not starving quickly enough to quickly die. Therefore the society offers a fee of fifty pounds for the trap that shall kill upon the moment, and leave only dead vermin for the game-keepers to clear away from among the thorns and ferns. Three several exhibitions of competing traps have the society held; three times have the judges weighed the important points of power and practicability. Traps—to the number of nearly five hundred—were sent in, that held a looking-glass to decoy; that were covered at the teeth with india-rubber gum; that tried, in other ways, to step up to the requirements; but up to the present time it has not been possible to arrive at any decision. There

some of the traps lie, with their jagged teeth, with their iron embrace, horrible looking enough. Side by side with them are some other instruments of torture—a whip, for instance, made of dromedary-hide, the cut from which is simply flaying, and the use of which the committee sternly forbid; and a series of horses' bits, seized by the society's officers in the very act of use, each one being a memento of detection and apprehension, and punishment earned and obtained.

Sheep, too, are among the clients of the R.S.P.C.A. Sheep ought not to be sheared too early in the season; sheep ought not to be sheared heedlessly, savagely, too near the skin. To prevent this last, the society shows specimens of shears under which it is impossible; the instrument has an under-blade, or tablet, to rest upon the skin, which protects it safely. To prevent the too-early shearing, the society can show nothing. In the variable climate of the British Isles, no British law could lay down rigidly in which week, or even which month, shearing could be quite harmless. Is there anything left, then, but the society's appeal to farmers, drovers, salesmen, husbandmen—everybody—to carry on their trade with as much mercy and consideration as possible?

Dogs are not likely to be forgotten in any thought about animals, and they are not forgotten in Jermyn-street. Light wire muzzles are shown upon the shelves, shaped—in the mode that skeleton dress-holders are in drapers' windows—to the form of the dogs' heads they are to muzzle; and they are lying there, Newfoundlands, greyhounds, spaniels, toys, in excellent resemblance. These are an invention to render biting impossible, and yet to allow the animal to breathe and drink without the least restraint; and they are of Swiss birth, seen by a lady, Miss Suckling, in Geneva, and sent over by her to the society to aid its benevolent efforts. Birds' nests lie beside them—or, rather, Edelsten's rustic-looking erections, the size of a cigar-box about—that shall serve as localities in which the saddened songsters of town gardens and squares may insert the nests they would much rather build themselves. Then there are saddle-chains, with wheels in the links, to let them shift with the horses' movements, and make no gall; there are traction-springs, to go between the shafts of a vehicle and the horse's collar, and thus to yield when the

horse makes a vigorous drawing effort, instead of forcing him to endure the counter-pull of the collar as well; there are spring appliances by which a fallen horse can be released from the shafts immediately; there are models of railway-trucks, for humanely conveying cattle, sent in as competition for the three-hundred-pound prize the society has offered; there are clippers to clip horses' hair with the best safety; there is a horse-collar, light, slender, elastic. There are some fifty horse-shoes exhibited, comprising every variety nearly, between the heavy north-country shoe, heavily calked for frostwork, and Charlier's, the lightest yet known; and including a shoe of buffalo-hide that is hoped to adjust itself more readily than iron can to the shape of the foot. Frost nails, and attachments of other sorts to ease labour, are to be found; indeed, the society is open to suggestions and specimens of any kind. All are laid before the committee; all get [patient investigation; and if anything is found good, no effort is spared to endeavour to get it brought into use.

Around the society's board-room walls are other matters from which hints can be obtained of the society's work. There are the names, in gilt letters on tablets, of the most active promoters and original donors; there is the portrait of the still living friend who gave the ground on which the building stands; there are engravings, some of Landseer's, some of more ordinary production, inculcating kindness to animals, and the knowledge of their habits and attachments; there is the letter, from Buckingham Palace, dated 1840, giving consent to the society taking the prefix Royal; there is a notice to visitors not to detain the officials too long; there are foreign diplomas—one is in Russian—notifying the height of estimation in which the society is held abroad. The society, in fact, enters into another branch of its labours, when it endeavours to establish fellow-societies and fellow-workers everywhere. In France there is no statutory law for enforcing humanity, as there is, happily, in England; the means there are, in consequence, limited to promoting it, by individual effort, by publications, by gifts of medals and diplomas. In Switzerland the matter is in full power; a serial, *L'Ami des Animaux*, is sent in proof of it. In Italy and Spain, the society itself has to strive after its objects by translating the English laws, and getting

them published in the form of little books, to be distributed by Italian and Spanish friends working with one accord; in Germany the friends are fervid and numerous; in Russia the adhesion amounts almost to enthusiasm—a valuable mark of which was the presence of Her Imperial and Royal Highness the Duchess of Edinburgh, at the society's jubilee; and from every country, when the delegates assembled at the jubilee, came warm assurances that England was acknowledged as the leader of the whole, that it was England's society, in the words of the speaker from Frankfort (Herr Revenstein), that "first taught that a child should learn kindness to animals, in order that the grown-up child should shrink from cruelty." In Scotland, Ireland, Wales, the provinces, the society has its channels and tributaries in full flow. It has eyes and hearts open, on official or merely humane watch, in hundreds of towns in the United Kingdom; and it will be sufficient to allude to the branch and sister societies in the colonies and elsewhere, by notifying that correspondence is kept up with such places as Boston, California, Calcutta, Guernsey, Melbourne, Quebec, Trieste, Vienna, Moscow, Odessa. Under the earth, too, to subterranean cities, does the society desire to go. These are the coal-mines, where many horses and ponies, to use the words on page twenty-six of the fifty-first report, "pass their entire lives in the bowels of the earth, from the day they enter the pit, until their toil and suffering are ended by death. Concealed from the observation of humane persons, these wretched creatures are compelled to labour on, with saddle and collar galls, while emaciated by debility, and tortured beyond conception." Let it be marked, too, that "officers of the society cannot descend to these scenes of cruelty without permission." There is no government or police inspection of the mines, that is the reason; on which account is it that the committee urge parliamentary interference, to get mine matters, in this way, welded in with their own. Into an infinity of sideway, and cuttings, and junctions, has the R.S.P.C.A. run, during the fifty-one years of its existence. It had once to step in, not long since, when an attempt was made to add a Spanish bull-fight to the London exhibitions. One of the weapons in actual use is amongst its treasured trophies; it is a wooden wand, three feet long possibly, ending

with a sharp iron probe, that could go an inch full into the bulls' bodies; and when the animals were all forfeited and killed, their skins were found to be riddled with holes, exactly as if they had been targets. The society has its attention fixed upon the new mode of shooting pigeons; upon polo; upon slaughter-houses; upon gag-reins; upon asphalte pavements; upon cattle water-troughs—at some of which twelve hundred horses drink daily, besides oxen, sheep, and dogs, and some of which cost each, for water only, thirty pounds a year—upon the transit of animals by land and sea; upon, most strenuously, the horrors of vivisection. In its early life, the society set its foot upon, and crushed, bull-baiting, bull-running, cock-fighting, badger-baiting, dog-draught; it is still obtaining convictions—two thousand is about the annual number—for an infinite variety of acts of cruelty; and the committee are little likely to abate their labours when they have to deal with the appalling fact of new modes of animal torture, albeit they may be for surgical purposes, and under the sanction of men of education. They are right to make the most vigorous and persistent protest that they can. From the stolid drover, screwing round with an oath the tails of the poor beasts in his charge, to the lively student, coolly removing a dog's bile-duct to see how its functions would get on without it, every act of cruelty is an act of cruelty; every act done leaves its doer the worse for it, keeps the nation stained and fettered with savage tendencies and habits, that, coming to light at first on animals, are sure to find some expression on fellow-creatures, and to leave the character marred and warped for life.

In this last fact lies the kernel of the R.S.P.C.A.'s growing scope and duties; of the reason why it must ever grow; of the reason why its exertions should be the exertions of every heart that beats. It is impossible to sectionise and subdivide cruelty, and to say such and such is a cruelty that will stop short at pulling a fly limb from limb, and shall never go on to plucking a live fowl, or dragging about a wife by a handful of her hair. Cruelty rarely has any resting-places of the kind; but, keeping the feelings blunted, leaves them at last with no idea or calculation of the sufferings of others. What is the action of the R.S.P.C.A., then, when this truth has thrust itself forward on every

investigation, and at last has fairly compelled recognition? It has simply entered upon a large new section of work—the last there is any need here to mention—meeting the truth once more face to face; and, seeing the advantage, too, of a fresh power to reach more widely than it could, otherwise, ever hope to reach, it has called a ladies' committee to take special action, and give the new aid required. This committee have for their president the Baroness Burdett Coutts, a lady whose name is sufficient guarantee for high aims and a noble way of attaining them, and a lady whose interest in this especial society was manifested, at the erection of the present building, by her kindness in laying the foundation-stone. The labours of this committee are, as may be expected, educational. They are aware that (mostly) a cruel child will be a cruel man; and their endeavour is to eradicate all semblance of cruelty, and to foster any and every expression of sympathy and kindness, so that savagery and brutality of all kinds shall be exterminated, and the laws of humanity everywhere be followed in their place. To this end, although the ladies have only been acting about four years, they have "transmitted suitable addresses and copies of The Animal World, the society's illustrated publication, to the many thousand schoolmasters and mistresses of the United Kingdom and English-speaking colonies." "They have promoted the preparation of essays on kindness to animals, written by children in many hundreds of schools; and they have, on several occasions, presented premiums to the best writers. They have endeavoured to encourage drovers, cabmen, and costermongers, by holding public meetings, and distributing rewards to several deserving men of their order. They have circulated leaflets, tracts, pamphlets, and other literature, broadcast; such being designed to inculcate humane principles; and, lastly, they have caused numerous popular lectures to be given to working-men, and in schools, on the wonders of the animal kingdom, and the claims which animals have upon man for humane treatment." No exposition of the ladies' work can be better than this extract from the ladies' own report; and to it not a syllable shall be added.

To come to statistics. The convictions of the society in the year 1835 were eighty; in the year 1845, two hundred

and fifty ; in the year 1855, five hundred and twenty-five ; in the year 1865, six hundred and sixty-seven ; and in the year 1875, nineteen hundred and ninety-seven. This is a multiplication that does not mean, for a surety, that England is growing more cruel ; it is an indication that the public are more alive to cruelty, and have risen to protest that they will have none of it. For, let it be understood, the crimes that have been punished by the R.S.P.C.A. have not all been detected by the paid officials of the R.S.P.C.A. The fullest encouragement is given by the society to all humane individuals, to keep watch and ward over all dumb creatures as earnest and searching as its own. Information has only to be given at the office—only the information must be full, special, authenticated; capable of the strictest investigation ; or, it is manifest, law expenses would be incurred, no conviction could be obtained, and the society would be thought impertinently interfering, and would fall under derision—and then very little trouble, and not a shilling of expense, will rest upon the informer, who, indeed, is a benefactor to the society as well as to mankind, by doing an official's business without an official's fee. As a point of fact, in the year when nineteen hundred and ninety-seven convictions took place, four hundred and three were by means of private persons ; the same being four times the amount of the total convictions obtained in a year, a quarter of a century ago. Going into finance, it shall just be stated that these nineteen hundred and ninety-seven convictions cost as many pounds (within a few shillings) ; that, to obtain them, veterinary surgeons were paid two hundred and one pounds, solicitors and counsel one hundred and sixteen pounds. Gratuities and rewards too—to such correspondents as were in circumstances seeming to require it—were made to the amount of two hundred and eight pounds seventeen shillings and eleven pence. This last item, no friend of the society would grudge. It is the poor who are most open to seeing cruelty in its various forms, in by-ways and neglected places ; it is the poor who are least able to afford the loss of even an hour's pay whilst they cease work to give the information. Yet it is amongst the poor that cruelty should be most anxiously and emphatically stopped ; for the poor are many, and the rich are few.

GRIFFITH'S DOUBLE.

BY MRS. CASHEL HOEY,
AUTHOR OF "A HOUSE OF CARDS," &c. &c.

BOOK V. LADY OLIVE DESPARD'S STORY.

CHAPTER V. A CLOSED BOOK.

"THE days of my girlhood were passed at my father's place in the Irish county of Sligo. Swanlinbarr was situated in a wild and beautiful part of the country, and we had few neighbours of any, none of our own, rank. I have already said enough about Barr and myself to show that we were good friends and companions, and about my father, to make it evident that our way of life bore but little resemblance to that of most people of our class. We were happy and free, a good deal spoiled by the flattery of servants, and of the poor people on and in the vicinity of my father's estate, and naturally ignorant of the ways of the world in which we did not live. My father was a very good man, but slow of perception, indolent-minded, and difficult to rouse to any appreciation of tastes, feelings, difficulties, impulses, or trials of which he had had no personal experience. My brother and myself were well cared for in every material respect, and left to ourselves and to chance in all respects other than material. On the whole, chance favoured us. My father looks upon Barr as a failure. I, on the contrary, regard him as a success, of an unusually brilliant kind, considering that he was born and reared under the trying and disadvantageous conditions of not being positively obliged to work either for himself or for others. Our moral education was of a rather negative and self-acquired kind ; and if I had been of a fanciful turn of mind, gifted with super-abundant sensibility and vivid imagination, I might have indulged in a great deal of very dangerous folly, for our surroundings were highly romantic.

"I was not romantic, happily—chiefly, I suppose, because I was not handsome, and knew it. The fact did not distress me, as it might have done had I lived in a wider sphere. Still, it would have been pleasanter to have been pretty—a fact which I perceived with increasing distinctness when 'the family' came to visit us at Swanlinbarr in batches, and I had an opportunity of comparing my cousins as they changed from childhood to girlhood. I had three sets of cousins, and they were all better-looking than I. It came

to pass that one of these pretty girls, who was a few years older than myself, 'made a conquest'—as it was the fashion of those days to say of the affairs of the heart, which are much more simply described in modern parlance—of a very dashing young dragoon indeed, who had a good old name and a comfortable fortune to lay at the feet of his fair victor.

"Aunt Mystic, as we called my father's sister, Lady Margaret Deane, was moved by her satisfaction at this pleasant matrimonial prospect for her daughter, to extend a hospitality to myself and Barr, which she had never previously exercised. She invited us up to Dublin for the wedding, and I got my first sight of the Irish metropolis.

"Aunt Mysie's husband is a clergyman of what was then the established Church of Ireland, a clever, eccentric man, untidy in his dress, desultory in his ways, and of unpopular, because liberal, opinions. Aunt Mysie suited him to perfection; she, too, was untidy in her dress, and desultory in her ways, but she had no opinions, except upon the advisability of early marriages, and the absolute necessity of 'parties' for making things pleasant to the young people. So the big house in an old-fashioned quarter, called Rutland-square, was one of the pleasantest in Dublin. The Reverend Decimus Deane was 'unattached' so long as I can remember, and there was plenty of money to keep things going in a style which was very agreeable without grandeur.

"I thought it all delightful, indeed, though the coming and going, and the number of people in the house confused and flurried me for a while, and the stirring scene outside contrasted strangely with the wild beauties of lonely nature amid which I had hitherto lived. Everything was very easy, very genial, and very much as everybody liked; and except that I found myself of considerably less importance among my cousins in Dublin than I had been at Swanlinbarr, I heartily enjoyed the oddity and the liberty of my novel experience.

"I found that a programme of gaieties altogether astounding to me was laid out for the fortnight preceding my cousin Gertrude's marriage; and that she and the bridegroom elect, Herbert Ellerton, entirely approved of this method of approaching the most solemn period of their existence. I wondered a little, but I joined in all that was going on with the

zest of youth, health, and unspoiled simplicity. I saw new faces and made new acquaintances every day.

The wedding-day was less than a week distant, when we all went to a large party at the house of an eminent barrister, whose wife, huge and hospitable, was said to have supplied Charles Lever, in her youth, with one of his charming portraits of a bouncing, cheery, merry, simple-hearted Irish girl. She had bouncing girls of her own now, and was beloved by all the mothers and daughters in Dublin for her liberal interpretation of the social duty of party-giving. Mrs. Jarvis had large rooms and a heart to match; and no stingy limitations, about the number of daughters or young friends to be taken to her parties, ever contradicted the instincts of her heart in the interests of her rooms. So we all went—a merry, happy party; and perhaps I was the happiest, because the most absolutely careless of the group. We were accustomed to parade before Mr. Deane on occasions of this kind, when he would criticise us with lazy good-humour, but not without discrimination. He said of me that night—"Pon my word, Olive, you're improving. I never saw you look so nice before, and that's a very tidy frock you've got on." From Mr. Deane, who would have found no more eloquent phrase than 'a very tidy frock' to describe the most sublime achievement of the art of millinery, this was enthusiastic praise, and it pleased me.

"Mrs. Jarvis's rooms were not overcrowded, and the party was an exceedingly pleasant one. I was speedily engaged for several dances, and had nearly got through my list, when Mrs. Jarvis introduced to me a young man whom I had noticed a good deal previously during the evening, and whom I did not remember to have seen on any former occasion. She named him to me as Mr. Edward Randall, and during the dance which he asked me for, I found that he was related, or known to—I was not sure which—some connections of my father's. The particulars are of no consequence, but the link of association was just enough to justify a recognition beyond that of the hour of a ball-room acquaintance, who was not one of our own set, for we had 'sets,' though they were not so strictly defined then as they are now.

"Edward Randall was handsome, manly, refined, and intelligent. My eyes and ears told me these facts, and a secret conscious-

ness, delicious and soon acknowledged, told me that he admired me in a way to which I was unaccustomed. I danced with him twice, and he observed me closely, though not obtrusively, when I danced with others. Somehow this party seemed to me unlike any that had preceded it, and I returned from it in a mood of mind which I had never before experienced. My cousins had plenty to say about Edward Randall next morning; for Herbert Ellerton knew him; and before the day closed his name was a household word among us. For before the day closed he had saved my life. The incident may be very briefly narrated; and the accident was the result of my own rashness, in undertaking to ride a horse with whose temper and ways I was unfamiliar. I had to learn that what I might do with impunity in Sligo, I could not do with impunity among a crowd of equestrians in the close-timbered Phoenix Park. My horse ran away with me, dashed in among the trees, and was stopped, I could not tell how, after I had had more than one narrow escape of a terrible death, or at least terrible injuries. When I could see and hear, I found that it was Edward Randall who had saved me, and the first page of the romance of my life was turned.

"I was weak and nervous after this for some time, and the wedding came off without my presence. But I did not keep my room, and my cousins were determined that things should not be dull either for me or for themselves; so that the afternoons were enlivened by many visitors, and among them came Edward Randall frequently. He was much liked, and though, perhaps, people would have said, if they were seriously asked, that they did not know much about him, he floated easily among the pleasure-loving society of Dublin at the time, and nobody was asked seriously any question concerning him. I heard it said of him sometimes in the horrid slang which is so dangerous a palliation of fatal truths, that he 'knew a thing or two,' that he had 'lived fast,' and so on; but I had not the remotest notion of what these expressions signified or implied, and I gave myself up to the influence which he exercised over me implicitly. I loved him—this utter stranger, this handsome, unknown young man, with the melancholy grey eyes and the care-lined temples, the soft voice, and the quiet manner which never failed to make me understand that in any presence and under all circumstances he was observing and intent upon me only.

"It is only an old story after all, but each one of us who might be made to tell it, could tell it with some variation unlike any that has ever been in any other life. They say no two leaves of all the trees of all the forests are absolutely similar, and no two human faces among all the multitudes of men; so no two human hearts have ever had precisely the same history. That of mine was brief and sad enough.

"I loved him, with all my heart, and all my fancy, and all my ignorance. I believed in him with all my girlish faith, and thought it a fine thing to trust so implicitly with so little knowledge. He was everything to me; his past, his prospects, his circumstances were nothing! How much the people who regard Lady Olive Despard as a rock of sense and far-sightedness and the least impulsive of mortals, would be astonished if they could have a vision of Lady Olive Barr! When Edward Randall told me that he loved me, and asked me to plight my troth to him, secretly for a time—to take him on trust, and wait until he should be able to make explanations which would enable him to claim me openly—I was wildly, intensely, entirely happy. It was a kind of happiness which I had never dreamed of, and which was untroubled by a single misgiving.

"'I will ask you of your father when the time comes,' he said, 'now I ask you only of yourself. Surely only we ourselves have the right to dispose of our lives.'

"'You saved mine, and it is yours,' was my reply. I can set all this down calmly now, and my life has not been his, but the suffering is real and enduring for all that, and in its innermost essence the promise I made to Edward Randall—and to myself—I have kept. I loved him, I have never loved any other but him.

"We parted, secretly betrothed lovers; and when my conscience reproached me, I silenced it by the reflection that it would have been very different if I had had a mother. Of course, I would not have concealed anything from her. I was to be in Dublin again in the spring, and then Edward Randall would come to Ireland, with 'something settled about the future'—this was his vague way of alluding to his position—and with this I was perfectly satisfied. He had made a half-jesting allusion to his having tried one or two 'professions,' but discovered he had no taste in those special directions; but it had all fallen unheeded on my 'charm'd ears.' I returned to my wild and lonely

home, and found it full of enchantment, the magic of love and hope. My lover wrote to me, and his letters were more delightful than even his spoken words. They came to me directed in a handwriting like a woman's, but it was his; and this necessity, as he assured me it was, and the facility with which he used it, made me wince. I posted my letters to him—those foolish, fervent, and, oh! how fondly sincere letters, with their silly signature, an etched olive-twigs—myself; this was easily done in my long, lonely rides.

"When Barr left home on his first foreign expedition, I went up to Dublin with him, and he left me at Aunt Mysie's house. My hidden happiness was a little troubled at last by the vagueness of the future, and Mr. Deane's first remark, on seeing me, was :

"'What on earth is the matter with you, Olive? You don't look half the girl you did when you left us.'

"At the time he had led me to expect him, Edward Randall came to Dublin, and we met. He had not any decided good news to tell me—he had achieved nothing to lessen the distance between us. My father's retired life and absolute indifference to the ideas and rules which ordinarily governed the existence of people of our class, would have entitled me to hope that he would not measure the social inequality between me and the man I loved very rigidly, and that my happiness would be his first consideration. Still, I must be able to tell him something definite—I must be able to tell him who and what Edward Randall was. These questions were getting asked, too, among the people in Dublin, where society is not sufficiently comprehensive to admit of the unexplained items which pass current in larger circles, and one of the persons who asked them was Mr. Deane. Answers were not readily forthcoming; and Herbert Ellerton, my cousin's husband, had nothing clearer to say on the subject of his knowledge of Edward Randall than, 'I met him a good deal about, you know.' It was unmistakable that there was a growing coldness towards him. Opportunities for our meeting did not present themselves so easily or so frequently as we had expected, and the happiness of my hidden love-story was changing into restless anxiety, self-reproach, and vain dread. This could not go on; I must tell my father. I would be firm to my plighted word and constant to my love through any

number of years; but it must no longer be concealed. Any girl would have experienced the same difficulty as that which beset me with regard to questioning my lover, whose love I had accepted without question or demur.

"I made up my mind that I would tell him my resolve—that my father must be informed of the truth, and that I was prepared to meet all opposition with persistence, and any delay with patience—at a certain ball, the last of the season, which was to be given by the officers of a popular regiment, on the eve of their departure from Dublin. The ball was a brilliant affair, and it afforded the seclusion of a great crowd. We had danced together after supper, and I knew Aunt Mysie would not remain much longer; I felt that what I had resolved to say must be said then, and I said it. We were alone, for a few minutes, on a balcony which had been converted into a tent; and, while I spoke with great difficulty the few words I had prepared, Edward Randall pushed aside a fold of the canvas screen with my fan, and looked out moodily into the street, which was crowded with carriages. The sickly dawn showed through the aperture, and his face looked pale and worn in it.

"'It can't be.' In such curt and decisive words he answered me.

"'Can't be?' I repeated; 'but it must be. I must tell my father. I can bear anything but this.'

"'I tell you, Olive, it can't be.' He struck the fragile sandal-wood fan upon the iron ledge of the balcony, and it broke into several pieces, which, not seeming to know what he was doing, he picked up and thrust into his pocket. 'It is impossible. You have trusted me so far; trust me farther. Give me time. Oh, no, no; it will be useless; I cannot hope to make any acceptable figure in your father's eyes. There is another way; there is a way by which we may escape suspense and secure happiness.'

"He drew me close to him; and, while the music crashed and the dancers whirled, he persuaded me, with all the eloquence and eagerness of love and pleading, to take my fate into my own hands, or, rather, to place it in his, by consenting to an elopement. My brain grew dizzy and my heart grew sick, as I listened to him while he drew pictures of our future life of love and freedom. He could arrange, he said, for our immediate marriage in England. I

don't know what I said ; I was frightened, not only by such a proposal, but by the vague sense that there must be something very wrong to induce him to make it. He wrung from me a promise to consider the matter, and to meet him early in the already-dawning day in the gardens close by my aunt's house.

"My good angel," he whispered, as our brief solitude was invaded by dispersed dancers, "consent, and you will have saved me."

"There was a mirror on the wall opposite to the balcony ; and, as I joined the crowd in the ball-room, I saw my own white face, and knew it could not pass unnoticed. I joined Lady Margaret Deane at once, pleaded fatigue, and in a few minutes was on my way home.

"I kept my appointment with Edward Randall ; and he again used every possible argument to induce me to consent to go away with him. I was very young, very ignorant of life, very much in love with him. I consented. I need not recapitulate here what our plans and arrangements were. We parted at the gate of the gardens ; he stood there and watched me until the door of Mr. Deane's house was closed upon me.

"Mr. Deane's study door was open, and he was standing in the aperture.

"Come in here, Olive," he said ; "I want to speak to you."

"I obeyed him, and as I entered the room, and he carefully shut the door, my eye fell upon a long letter which lay upon his writing-table ; but I had no notion that it could concern me.

"'My dear,' said Mr. Deane, 'I want you to answer me some questions, quietly, you know, without flurrying yourself, and believing that I am your very true friend. I need not remind you that I represent your father just now.' He paused for a moment, laid his big hand very gently on my head, and added :

"Did you go out this morning to meet Mr. Randall ?"

"I shrank and shivered, but I told the truth. 'Yes, uncle, I did.'

"Ah ! I thought so. And how much do you know of Mr. Randall, Olive ? What is he ? Who is he ? What is his character ? What has he persuaded you to consent to ? Why is there a secret understanding between you and him ? Don't be afraid to tell me everything, and remember this is only known to you and me.'

"How did you know ?"

"I first suspected, and then I observed. Answer my first questions."

"I cannot, uncle ; I don't know much. I—oh, uncle, he loves me, and I love him !'

"Poor child ! " He walked about the room, muttering to himself disjointed phrases of pity, and then saying aloud, "It must be done," he seated himself opposite to me, and took up the letter I had observed. It was from Herbert Ellerton, and its first lines contained a caution against permitting Edward Randall to be received at my uncle's house. This caution was followed by very plain and full statements, which made out the man I loved to be an adventurer, a gambler, and one to whose hands no woman could confide her peace and happiness with any reasonable hope or security. I denied these things ; I fought against conviction ; I would not listen to my uncle's argument that Edward Randall's very conduct, with regard to myself, bore out the view of his character which Herbert Ellerton had set before him—I fought, as young creatures will fight, for life, for happiness, for joy, and I had no cruel antagonist.

"Mr. Deane passed lightly over my shortcomings, and told me he would only exact from me that I should give Edward Randall up on proof of the truth of Herbert Ellerton's discoveries. If my confidence were indeed well founded this was asking nothing. If it were not ? Even so ! I caught at the recollection of the words he had said : 'My guardian angel, you will be my salvation !'

"And you would marry a man to reform him, Olive ?" my uncle asked me with a great sadness in his face and voice. "You would undertake the most hopeless of tasks from the most disadvantageous of standpoints ? And you would commence the task with a false oath ?"

"What do you mean ?"

"By swearing to honour and obey a man whom you could not honour, and dare not even intend to obey, or follow in his course of life, or thought, or opinion. My child, if ever there was evil out of which no good can come, it is the evil which a woman does with such a wild and baseless purpose as that before her."

"I heeded his words little then—I was in agony too keen and new ; but I never forgot them ; and they have served me with others since. After a long interview my uncle sent me away to my room, where I should be privileged to remain. I had not told him of the foolish and

wicked plan to which I had that morning consented; it had vanished into impossibility with almost his first words.

"Write to Mr. Randall," he said, "and give me your letter. I will deliver it to him myself, and tell him plainly all that has occurred. If he can clear himself from these charges, I promise you that I will not hinder your views. If your marrying him should involve mere obscurity and the lack of wealth, well and good. A Christian woman may sacrifice this world's good things to love; but she may not sacrifice God's law, or a single dictate of her conscience."

"I left him, and I wrote the letter. I passed the day and night in a state of suffering which my aunt and cousins imputed to bodily illness. On the following day my uncle told me that he had seen Edward Randall, that it was all true, and that he had given me up! He told me very tenderly and with great compassion, and he put into my hands the answer to my letter. It was an acknowledgment that he had been mercifully dealt with, and a farewell. I believe he thought I would have sacrificed everything for him even then, even when I knew that I had been worshipping a dream-god; and that he would not let me. I shall always believe that in this instance he acted well, and, conquering temptation, defended me against myself; I shall always believe it because I knew—and why should not he divine?—how extreme was my own weakness.

"I had a long illness, a low, nervous fever, which hung about me for weeks. I knew from my uncle that Edward Randall had left Ireland, and after some time Mr. Deane told me that he had declared his intention of going to one of the colonies. The whole matter remained a secret between my uncle and me. They sent me home, and I grew stronger in the wild and lonely country. Once I received a newspaper with a marked paragraph—it was a list of passengers by some ship to Melbourne. His name was on the list. I go through it somehow, as one gets through everything, but much in the fashion that one may get through a quickset hedge—with lasting bruises and scratches.

"Four years later, my cousin, Colonel Despard, came home from India, and after

a brief delay, came to Swanlinbarr. It was not very long before he asked me to marry him. In this case at least I should take no false oath; I could honestly swear to honour and obey that upright, brave, honourable gentleman. But the other vow, could I take that? If to love him must mean to feel what I had felt for Edward Randall, no. I told him the whole truth, and placed my doubt before him. He was satisfied with such love as I could give him. 'It will grow,' he said, 'because it has roots.' The old love had been dead, though not forgotten, for many a day. Colonel Despard was right; we were happy in a quiet way during our short married life, and his death was terrible to me.

"I had never heard of Edward Randall since, until I read his name in Mrs. Pemberton's letter. He was dead; he had died in her house, and the shelter she gave him cost her husband's life. All this I read in the paper which not my wildest fancy could have imagined to have any link of connection with me and my past life. The missing chapter is added to my story, but I read between its lines something more. The woman who paid with all her earthly happiness for the good deed she did to him, is the woman whom he wronged for me. I feel it; an instinct tells me that is the meaning of the allusion, and the reservation, she makes respecting some communication to her husband. The farewell message which she undertook to deliver was a message for me—the sea holds the secrets of her life and of mine. But something remains. The enemy whom this woman dreaded, the man against whom she warns Mr. Dwarris, is Edward Randall's enemy, is the man who robbed him when he was dying; and the living link which survives all this dead-and-gone coincidence is that it will be for me, the unknown inheritor of her task, to save Ida Pemberton from herself and from Geoffrey Dale."

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